Several hundred boys were killed and thousands were taken prisoner, mistreated, and jailed. The Cossacks refused to support the students—some, because they considered the whole adventure as hopeless; others, because the Communists had persuaded them that the purpose of the revolt was to restore Kerensky to power.

Moscow had offered more resistance to the coup, but here also the forces opposed to the new government were crushed by the garrison.

Meanwhile an anti-Bolshevist Committee for the Salvation of the Revolution, politically close to the Council of the Republic, had been organized in Petrograd. Its delegates came to Gatchina in the evening. They described the conditions in the capital. All public services were paralyzed; all employees of government departments and banks had gone on strike against the new regime. The railroad workers were split—some recognized the new government, others refused to execute its orders. The Communists felt themselves insecure. The delegates implored Krasnov to strike at once, with all his forces, and assured him that the resistance of the Petrograd garrison would be very weak.

Krasnov called Kerensky and me to his office and briefed us on the military situation. A straight offensive against Petrograd with the available forces was out of the question, he told us. After posting guards at strategic points to safeguard communications, he would have no man left for further operations. On the other hand, without an offensive the task force would begin to disintegrate. Krasnov therefore decided to undertake a limited offensive for a local objective, using all his forces but keeping open a means of retreat to initial positions. The offensive would be directed against Pulkovo.

The operation started at dawn. The Cossacks reached the outskirts of Pulkovo without opposition. Further advance was barred by a line of flimsy field fortifications, similar to those we had used against Kornilov's troops in August. Such fortifications would not have withstood heavy artillery fire but were effective enough against cavalry supported by a few light field pieces. The Cossacks had to dismount.

The Petrograd troops had no artillery, and their fire was not very effective, but they greatly outnumbered the Cossacks. They did not try to counterattack but maintained a continuous fire from their trenches. By evening, Krasnov ordered a retreat. But rear action continued, and the Petrograd detachments also left their positions. We learned later that several hundred defenders of Pulkovo had been killed. Casualties on our side were nine or ten men killed and a score wounded. For a small task force, without reserves, these were sizable losses. Krasnov decided to abandon Tsarskoe and withdraw to Gatchina.

During this engagement I remained in our Gatchina headquarters.